REMARKS

Claims 1-9 are pending. Claims 8 and 9 were added to further define the invention. Withdrawal of the prior art rejection is respectfully requested for at least the reasons set forth below.

No new matter was added to the claims. The new language added to claims 8 and 9 is clearly supported by Figs. 10, 11(a)-11(d) and 13.

Uncited References from Information Disclosure Statement

Applicants filed an Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) on June 18, 1998. There is no record that the IDS was considered by the Examiner. Applicants request that the IDS be considered in the next Office Action. A copy of the originally filed IDS and PTO-1449 is enclosed, along with a copy of the postcard receipt showing proof of the filing and receipt by the USPTO of the IDS. A Supplemental IDS accompanies this response.

Discussion of Presently Claimed Invention

The present invention gives entertainment facilities who own or lease game machines the following increased functionality for their machines:

(1) Conduct tournaments on a frequent basis and for varying durations of time.

(2) Conduct a variety of different types of tournaments at the same time.

(3) Conduct tournaments with a minimal amount of attendant or operator support.

(4) Conduct a tournament in a completely paperless manner.

(5) Track prize pools and prize payouts in a convenient and secure manner.

(6) Conduct tournaments without the necessity of all of the players being present at the end of the tournament.

These functions are implemented, in part, by allowing the operator <u>to preprogram one or more sequences of tournament games</u>. After a tournament sequence is preprogrammed, the tournament games automatically start and stop in accordance with the programmed sequence.

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A "sequence" is (1) a "following of one thing after another; succession, or (2) an order of succession; arrangement." The American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1985.

Figs. 10, 11(a)-11(d) and 13 clearly illustrate the tournament sequence preprogramming scheme. There are a plurality of tournament periods indicated by CURRENT, NEXT, NEXT+1, and so on. As shown in the top row of Fig. 13, there may also be a plurality of tournament sequences so that at any given time period, a player may participate in a plurality of <u>different</u> tournaments.

Discussion of applied reference

Thacher et al. discloses a tournament system for electronic games but does not disclose or suggest <u>preprogramming a sequence of tournament games</u>. Instead, the system in Thacher et al. provides for a <u>single</u> tournament play period. During the single tournament play period, a player may select from a plurality of games of different kinds. Each game may be handicapped by a different "difficulty handicap." In this manner, a single tournament can be run while allowing the players to select different games. At the conclusion of the single tournament, a single winner is selected. The kinds of games may be changed but there is no discussion of doing so in a <u>preprogrammed sequential manner</u>. See the following text in Thacher et al. wherein underlining has been added for emphasis.

Preferably the computer then downloads a menu which is displayed on the game screen, giving the player several options, such as playing in the tournament, playing a practice game, selecting play of a <u>different</u> game, etc. The player can select the game by using the keypad. (column 3, lines 18-23)

The central computer preferably has previously stored a <u>difficulty handicap</u> associated with each kind of game. (column 3, lines 24-25)

...Further, the interface facilitates automatically changing the <u>kinds</u> of games. (column 3, lines 53-54)

Another embodiment of the invention is a tournament system comprising a plurality of games of different kinds, apparatus for storing a <u>handicap value</u> relating to the kind of game relative to other ones of the games at either of the games or the central computer, a central

computer linked to the games for receiving scores achieved on the games, whereby scores achieved on the games can be determined and modified by the handicap value associated with each of the games. (column 4, lines 49-57)

...Thus when a score is received at central computer 6, it can be modified in any one or more of three ways, the first by the kind of game, the second by play difficulty of that kind of game, and the third by the handicap previously assigned to the player. Since both the player number and his previous handicap level and also the above-described factors associated with each game are stored at the central computer, the central computer can automatically assign an equivalent score value different from the actual score received for each game played by each specific player. This facilitates players of widely differing abilities to play on various kinds of video games in a single tournament with an approximate equal degree of fairness. (column 8, lines 35-48)

... As an example of operation, tournaments could be held over a period of days, weeks or months at the local central computer level at hundreds or thousands of locations across the country or the world. By this means players are handicapped, the resulting handicap data being stored preferably in the central computers 6. At a later time, regional tournaments would be held whereby those wishing to participate play on their local video games, but this time the central computers 6 are polled by means of the regional computers 13. While the player numbers, handicaps and high scores are retained at the central computer level 6, each of the central computers 6 is polled by the associated regional computer, which calculates by means of comparison of handicap scores modified by the game skill level, which player number, at which specific game, is declared the winner. (column 9, lines 41-56)

The operator then will key a code into keypad 32 (or can key the code in at the central computer 6) which identifies the form of the game, e.g. representing PACMAN.TM., SARGON II.TM. etc. This code should be common for similar kinds of games throughout the local system, and preferably should also be common throughout the system.

The unique game and "kind of game" data are transmitted via the peripheral interface adapters to the bus 23 from which they are transmitted to the central computer 6 after storage in RAM 26A, upon polling from the central computer as described below. (column 12, lines 44-55).

Assuming that the player selects a menu item by which the kind of game to be played is to be changed,... (column 16, lines 5-6)

In the present case the interface circuitry has taken over the function of controlling the game, but utilizing the original game display. In this manner the players can be given a choice of many different kinds of, games; they are not restricted to the use of the game for which the video game was originally designed. (column 16, lines 45-50).

In sum, the system in Thacher et al. centralizes and automates the tournament process for a plurality of remotely located game machines, but does not disclose or <u>suggest preprogramming a sequence</u> of tournament games.

Prior Art Rejection

Claims 1-2, 5 and 6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being clearly anticipated by Thacher et al. In the Office Action, it is alleged that the international computer 15 preprograms at least one sequence of tournament games and that the regional computers 13 program tournament periods.

Applicants agree that the system in Thacher et al. preprograms tournament games and tournament periods. However, as highlighted above, no <u>sequences</u> are programmed in Thacher et al. Applicants have carefully reviewed the discussion of the functions of the international computer 15 as described on columns 9-10 of Thacher et al. and cannot find any support for the Examiner's assertions that this computer preprograms a sequence of tournament games.

Thacher et al. fails to disclose each and every element in the independent claims 1 and 5. Accordingly, withdrawal of the § 102(b) rejection of claims 1-2, 5 and 6 is respectfully requested. Furthermore, since Thacher et al. does not even suggest preprogramming a sequence of tournament games, claims 1-2, 5 and 6 are also believed to be unobvious over Thacher et al.

New Claims 8 and 9

Claims 8 and 9 are believed to be patentable because they are dependent upon allowable claims 1 and 5, respectively, and because they recite additional patentable features.

Conclusion

Insofar as the Examiner's rejections were fully addressed, the instant application is in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowability of all pending claims is therefore earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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